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SUBJECT: APDP MONGOLIAN ELECTION OBSERVATION MISSION
REF: STATE 46489

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Brian L. Goldbeck for Reason 1.4 (d).

11. (C) SUMMARY AND COMMENT: Post visited Mongolia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) on May 2 to discuss the Asia Pacific Democracy Partnership (APDP) and its proposal to send an Election Observation Mission (EOM) to Mongolia for its Parliamentary elections, tentatively scheduled for June 29. MFA Counselor Batjargal said that as soon as the elections are formally announced (likely in mid-May), Mongolia's General Election Commission will be able to officially invite foreign observers, and that "APDP observers will be most welcome." He said Mongolia looked forward to attending the APDP meeting in Manila later this month. We informed him that the Philippine Government had declined to host that meeting. Batjargal said he would discuss this development with his colleagues, but that it "probably would not be a major problem." He said he had recently discussed APDP issues with officials of other countries and found that some are "still cautious about the APDP." Separately, Batjargal asked about the relationship between the APDP and the Bali Democracy Forum. On EOM funding, Batjargal indicated that Mongolia would face difficulty in providing financial support. The International Republican Institute's (IRI) Mongolia Country Rep told us he felt "incredibly uninformed" about the EOM. He said he had no information on how many APDP EOM members would come to Mongolia, or when, or whether funding for the EOM would be approved. IRI will likely have no more than half a dozen staffers available to logistically support the EOM. Meanwhile, the MFA - understaffed, underfunded, relatively new to elections, and in the midst of its own summer transfer season - may be unable to contribute much to the EOM, apart from hosting the APDP's first substantive activity. END SUMMARY AND COMMENT.

12. (C) Post visited Mongolia's Foreign Ministry on May 2 and, per ref tel, discussed the Asia Pacific Democracy Partnership (APDP) and a proposal for the APDP to send an Election Observation Mission (EOM) to Mongolia for its Parliamentary elections, tentatively scheduled for June 29. Econ/Pol Chief, accompanied by PMF, met with MFA Counselor Batjargal of the Multilateral Cooperation Department, the GOM's point man on the APDP. We underlined the USG's desire to move forward with the EOM proposed by the Mongolian rep at the APDP discussion in Bamako in November 2007; explained that

the International Republican Institute (IRI) had expressed willingness to provide (under contract) logistical support to the EOM; and said the United States urges Mongolia to contribute between \$50,000 and \$100,000 to the cost (total estimated at \$412,000) of the EOM.

13. (C) Batjargal noted that Mongolia's Parliamentary elections will not be formally announced until later this month; until that happens, he said, the General Election Commission will not be able to officially invite foreign observers. Once the announcement is made, however, "APDP observers will be most welcome," he said. (Note: By our calculations, Parliament has until May 16 to formally announce the elections, in compliance with Mongolian law. End Note.) Batjargal said Mongolia looked forward to attending the APDP meeting in Manila later this month. We informed him that the Philippine Government had respectfully declined to host that meeting. Batjargal said he would have to discuss this development with his colleagues, but that it "probably would not be a major problem." Batjargal observed that at the Bamako gathering, participants envisioned holding an APDP meeting in Asia in the first half of 2008. "We certainly would have welcomed that before the election team comes, but this should not present a major obstacle," he said.

SOME COUNTRIES "STILL CAUTIOUS" ABOUT APDP

14. (C) Batjargal said he had recently and briefly discussed APDP issues with officials of a number of other countries, and said some are "still cautious about the APDP." He indicated that some are concerned about whether certain Asian countries, "like Malaysia and Singapore," are being excluded from the group. Batjargal indicated that although the APDP cannot, by its very nature, admit all countries, exclusions should be carefully considered. E/P Chief said the APDP is intended to be inclusive, and that over the course of time, we hope that more Asia-Pacific countries, encouraged by the APDP, will take steps that enable them to participate in the group. With regard to Malaysia and Singapore, we informed Batjargal that the USG had engaged the Malaysians, and that we were unsure whether Singapore had been similarly engaged.

BALI DEMOCRACY FORUM

15. (C) Batjargal asked about the relationship between the APDP and the Bali Democracy Forum, and whether the Forum "fits into the APDP." He noted that the APDP is regional, while the Forum appeared to him to be sub-regional. Batjargal expressed hope that consultations would be held between the two groups, to avoid unintended repetition in pro-democracy efforts. We noted that the APDP and the Bali Democracy Forum are separate and distinct, adding that because the latter is an Indonesian Government initiative, Post could not speak on its behalf. We informed Batjargal that we would request information from Washington on what relationship, if any, exists between the APDP and Forum.

MONETARY COMMITMENT "UNREALISTIC"

16. (C) On the issue of funding for the EOM, Batjargal indicated that Mongolia would have a hard time coming up with financial support. "I'm not sure if we can come up with funding," Batjargal said. "We could make some kind of commitment, but more in kind than in monetary terms. A monetary commitment would be unrealistic at this stage." He also took us up on our offer to share with him details of the envisioned \$412,000 budget.

17. (SBU) Batjargal said Mongolia is grateful that its suggestions were incorporated into the APDP non-paper.

IRI MONGOLIA "FEELING INCREDIBLY UNINFORMED"

18. (C) IRI's Mongolia Country Rep spoke with us on May 2. He

said he was "feeling incredibly uninformed" about the proposed EOM. He said he had no information on how many APDP EOM members would come to Mongolia, or when, or whether funding for the EOM would even be approved. The IRI rep said the Mongolia office has five employees: himself; an official focused on elections; an official focused on Parliament; an accountant; and a driver. He said that regardless of whether the EOM is realized, another IRI staffer will be inbound. Once the EOM is confirmed, he said, another IRI staffer would likely come to Mongolia. In addition, a more senior IRI rep, working at the regional level, was planning to visit Mongolia in June or July.

¶9. (U) IRI, with considerable experience in election observation, started training Mongolian poll watchers on May 12. This training will be held at a variety of points across the nation; the program will end on June 26.

¶10. (SBU/NF) An IRI election expert based in Bangkok has accepted Post's request to visit Mongolia prior to the Parliamentary elections, to brief the members of the Embassy's modest election observation team. (Note: This Embassy team is separate from the proposed APDP team, although using our limited resources, we will look for ways to cooperate with the EOM for mutual benefit. End Note.)

COMMENT

¶11. (C) Slowly but surely, Mongolia is ramping up its participation in the APDP. Batjargal said he would reply to us between May 5 and 9 on the question of funding; we also expect to hear then whether the GOM's position on the EOM has changed as a result of the Manila meeting's cancellation. Our sense is that it will not. That said, the MFA - understaffed, relatively new to elections, and currently in the midst of its own summer transfer season - may not be able to contribute much to the EOM effort, apart from hosting the APDP's first substantive activity.

¶12. (SBU/NF) Post would appreciate a detailed breakdown of the IRI EOM budget, to provide to the MFA. We would also be grateful for information on how Washington views the relationship between the APDP and the Bali Democracy Forum. We would like to hear Washington's best guess as to how many APDP election monitors are expected to come to Mongolia, and when. (Note: For contingency planning, Post has booked 40 hotel rooms for a seven-day period in late June and early July. Post will try to be helpful but IRI will need to provide virtually all/all of the APDP EOM's logistical support, as post lacks funding and personnel to do so and will be thinned due to the summer transfer season and its own limited election observation mission. End Note.)

ELECTION SNAPSHOT

¶13. (SBU) All 76 of Mongolia's Parliamentary seats will be up for grabs in the June 29 elections. The ruling Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party (MPRP), which holds a bare majority with 39 seats and leads a three-party coalition government, is locked in what appears to be a close race with the major opposition Democratic Party. Post has met with the General Election Commission's top two officials; they assured us that members of the Embassy election team would have no problem getting credentialed.

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